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*The Gift of
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PICTURES AND PAINTERS.

PICTURES AND PAINTERS.

ESSAYS

UPON

ART:

THE OLD MASTERS

AND

MODERN ARTISTS.



NEW YORK:
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P R E F A C E.

BUT few words are necessary to introduce the following papers upon the FINE ARTS, from the "*North American Review*," the "*Massachusetts Quarterly Review*," and the "*American Review*."

They evince so great an extent of knowledge, and so much maturity of judgment, in respect to the subjects of which they treat, and so much learning generally, that their republication cannot but tend to the diffusion of correct ideas upon ART; and, as a consequence, the wider appreciation of its importance. A concentration of public attention is wanted to uphold *American Artists*, and insure for them that measure of favor to which they are justly entitled. Without government aid, or adequate public appreciation, they can neither bestow time upon their works, nor give "scope to their genius."

The first step towards giving to ART "a local habitation and a name" in our country, would be the union of all the different *Galleries* of this city under one roof, for study and exhibition. This measure would tend, more

than any other, to concentrate public attention, and to give to the Arts of Design a more conspicuous, and therefore more worthy, position than they have hitherto held in our country.

The presence of a *Collection* of authentic *Works* by the *Great Masters of Painting*,* and the near approach of the usual period of the exhibitions of the *Works of American Artists*, seem to indicate the peculiar fitness of the present time for this republication.

New York, February, 1849.

* The Gallery of the Old Masters, at the Lyceum Building, is here referred to.

PICTURES AND PAINTERS.

I. MODERN PAINTERS

COMPARED WITH

"THE OLD MASTERS."

THIS* is a book written by a well-educated man, a close and intelligent observer of nature, familiar with the best works of art, and himself a practical, though, as we understand him, not a professional artist; thus seeming to combine qualifications for writing well on this difficult subject, which are not often found united. That he is not a professional artist does not the less entitle him to our attention; such persons being very apt to become too much absorbed in the mere difficulties of their pursuit to preserve the breadth of mind necessary to comprehend the whole subject. The best works on art that were ever written are Sir Joshua Reynolds's desultory Notes and Discourses; and he was by profession only a portrait-painter. In historical and fancy compositions he was little more than an amateur. He painted them experimentally, and more from love of it than for gain. His profound knowledge of high art lay in theory and observation; his practice in it was not enough to narrow his mind down to any particular system or manner. He saw and appreciated what was good in all manners, and excused nothing because it flattered his vanity or his indolence. Though he could not have written as he did if the pencil had not been more familiar to his hand than the pen, neither could he have done so if he had spent in the solitude of his studio, and in the severe practice that Art demands of her followers, the time which he

* *Modern Painters*, by a Graduate of Oxford. [An article from the North American Review, No. CXXXVIII, republished by permission.]

passed in galleries and in the society of the most intellectual men of his day.

It cannot be denied, therefore, that the author before us, if he announces anything new, however startling, is entitled to a respectful hearing; and if, upon examination, he appears to have lent his advantages to the support of errors, or to have endeavored upon no sufficient ground to shake well-established opinions, he ought the more carefully to be corrected.

The book is written with great ability of manner, though in a style somewhat loose and declamatory, and infected with the modern cant which uses new phrases to cover up obscure meaning. It contains many very acute and frequently novel observations upon nature, and much sound discussion of the general principles of art. But the sole purpose of the book, to which all this is sometimes subordinate and sometimes quite irrelevant, seems to be to maintain the strange proposition, that the old landscape-painters of the seventeenth century were very mean and ordinary artists, and that Mr. Turner and certain other modern English painters are immeasurably their superiors, and have indeed carried the art almost to perfection. So fiercely is it devoted to this object, and so extravagantly does it condemn on the one hand and exalt on the other, that it is difficult to believe it to be done on good faith. It would seem, that, if we acquit the author of being, from whatever motives, a mere personal partisan, we must regard him, notwithstanding his evident knowledge of the subject, as wholly deficient in a true feeling for art. It is difficult to come to either of these conclusions. It will be safer and more candid to leave him on the middle ground of prejudice; and we think we perceive to what this is to be attributed, as we shall presently have occasion to state. That the attempt is a total failure will be the immediate judgment of all those who have seen and understood the works thus condemned; and even those who have not, however they may at first be carried away by the confident tone and plausible exaggerations of the author, would find, on a review of the book, that its conclusions rest on no basis but unsupported statements, contradicted by the uniform judgment of all who have seen those works before him. They would find many things palpably inconsistent, many of which it requires no knowledge of art to perceive the absurdity, some

things absolutely false in fact, and nothing which can justly lay claim to be considered as any new discovery upon which opinions so old should be overthrown.

But most persons to whom the subject is not already familiar will rest satisfied with the first impression made by such a book. It has already acquired great popularity, having passed through three editions in England, and been reprinted here. We happen to know, too, that it has excited more attention than it deserves among persons interested in the arts. In Europe, where the works of the old masters continually speak for themselves, such a book can do no lasting harm; but here, where those works are unknown except to those who see them abroad, unfrequently or at long intervals, there is danger that the effect may be more permanent. It leads the public mind in the way in which it is already too apt to go, especially among ourselves. We are not too willing admirers of antiquity in anything, for long past time seems to us to belong to the nations of the Old World, and the present to be more fitly represented by our own; the *ignotum pro magifico* is not the error to which we are most prone. In this very matter of the supremacy of the old masters, there has always been a rebellious doubt among those who have never seen their works, and a suspicion that those who have seen them praise them for that reason. It is a very natural doubt; for, in the first place, nobody has ever yet given any good reason why there should have been so much better artists in those days than in our own; though we think a careful examination of the difference in the condition of society and the extent of literary education at the first of these two periods and at any subsequent time would furnish an easy and very interesting answer. In the next place, it is almost impossible to convince one wholly unlearned in the art, that it requires much more than a mere resemblance to nature, of which he will consider himself to be as competent a judge as the most learned. It is this last notion particularly that this book is adapted to flatter. The "truth of nature" is the constantly recurring phrase by which the author estimates the value of art. If he had confined his conclusions within as narrow limits as he has his reasons for them, the question would be comparatively of little importance, because this mere fidelity to the detail which marks individual nature is of far less value than the

other requirements of art, and is much less apt to mark the superiority of one school or period over another. But when, because Claude, Gaspar, and Salvator make the trunks of their trees taper when they should not, or more than they should, and because Mr. Turner imitates with marvellous exactness the reflection of a signpost in the water under most extraordinary circumstances, such distinctions are made the basis of the most sweeping denial of all merit on the one side, and of the most extravagant laudation on the other, the true purpose of art is overlooked ; which is not simply to put into gilt frames that which can be seen at any time, or even but occasionally, by looking out of doors ; but to select the finest realities of nature and combine them into one consistent ideal scene, in which all things and all parts of things, shall be omitted that contribute nothing to the general effect of physical beauty and moral sentiment,—such a scene as possibly might, but certainly never did, exist, but of which nature furnishes the inexhaustible materials.

We are aware that the author in his preface denies that he draws such general conclusions against the old masters from this want of the truth of nature ; and this denial is not less discreditable to him from its disingenuousness, than is the error, for which it attempts an apology.

“ Of the old masters I have spoken with far greater freedom ; but let it be remembered that only a portion of this work is now presented to the public, and it must not be supposed, because in that particular portion and with reference to particular excellences I have spoken in constant depreciation, that I have no feeling of other excellences of which cognisance can only be taken in future parts of this work. Let me not be understood to mean more than I have said, nor be made responsible for conclusions, when I have only stated facts. I have said that the old masters did not give the truth of nature ; if the reader chooses thence to infer that they were not masters at all, it is his conclusion, not mine.”—*Preface*, p. ix.

Now let us see what he has said of these old masters, and how far he has left a way open for taking cognisance of any of their excellences in a future part of this work ; and whether there is any danger of his being understood to mean more of them than he has said, and whose conclusion it is that they were not

masters at all. It is first, however, to be observed, that by the term, old masters, he has explained that he means, not the great historical painters of the first half of the sixteenth century, but that later generation which, beginning with the Carracci, includes all the great French, Italian, Dutch, and Flemish landscape-painters. Now it may be remarked in passing, that although the former class, with one exception, painted no landscapes, and therefore are not included in the author's general condemnation, yet the same faults might be found with their historical works as are here so much insisted on against those of the landscape-painters; for they frequently, whether from error or design, violated this truth of nature in parts of their pictures; and if the same judgment were passed on them on the same grounds, Raphael and his contemporaries would fall in the same heap with Claude and Salvator.

We should be inclined to think unfavorably of a person's capacity for judging correctly of works of art, who appeared insensible to the personal qualities of the artist. There is so much of the man in the works of the painter, that we always seem to have known his heart as well as his hand. A critic who could take pleasure in repeating the calumnies that have been made to darken the early death of Raphael can have no feeling for the sublime tenderness of his Madonnas; and we should, on the other hand, think the better of his taste who was inclined to search narrowly into the defects of works which so evidently display a ferocious temper as those of Caravaggio and Ribera. We confess that we felt a kind of prejudice against this author, when we read his sweeping and bitter denunciation of the gentle Domenichino, who has preserved to the present time that *sobriquet* of endearment which he received from his master when he exhibited his first work; who, born in the decline of art, rose to an eminence that provoked the fatal hostility of rivals, and drew from the profound Nicolo Poussin the praise of having produced the second picture in the world; whose sublime Communion of St. Jerome stands now uneclipsed by the side of the Transfiguration in the Vatican; and who, with all who have entered deeply into the history of art, stands next to Raphael in their affection for his gentle and yet lofty genius. In an evil hour for his fame, if this author can dispense it, he attempted landscape; and though

Turner and all the water-color men in England might esteem themselves most fortunate when they could equal the dewy freshness of the grove in which Diana holds up to her nymphs the prize for archery, and may well despair of ever approaching the twilight grandeur of his more solemn scenes, yet nothing less than the sacrifice of his entire fame can satisfy this ardent partisan.

"I once supposed that there was some life in the landscape of Domenichino, but in this I must have been wrong. The man who painted the Madonna del Rosario and the Martyrdom of St. Agnes, in the gallery of Bologna, is palpably incapable of doing anything good, great, or right in any field, way, or kind whatever."—p. 87.

Now what room is there left here for taking cognisance of other excellences in a future part of this work? Who states here the fact, and who draws the conclusion, whether Domenichino is any master at all? There is no fact stated as to his landscape, but that the author once thought, as everybody else still does, that there was life in it, until he saw certain of his inferior historical works, and from them he reverses his own judgment of his landscape, and denies the possibility of his doing anything good, great, or right in any field, way, or kind whatever.

"In Salvator there is no love of any kind for anything; his choice of landscape features is dictated by *no delight in the sublime*, but by mere animal restlessness or ferocity, guided by an imaginative power of which he could not altogether deprive himself. *He has done nothing which others have not done better, or which it would not have been better not to have done.*"—p. 88.

Now is this merely denying that Salvator gives the truth of nature? And what room is left in the forthcoming continuation of this work to show that he is, notwithstanding all this, a master?

Again, of those who have been universally allowed to excel all others in rendering the truth of water:—

"The water-painting of all the elder landscape-painters, excepting a few of the better passages of Claude and Ruysdael, is so execrable, so beyond all expression and explanation bad, and Claude and Ruysdael's best are so cold and valueless, that I do not know how to ad-

dress those who like such painting; I do not know what their sensations are respecting sea. I can perceive nothing in Vandevelde or Backhuysen of the lowest redeeming merit; no power, no presence of intellect, or evidence of perception, of any sort or kind; no resemblance, even the feeblest, of anything natural; no invention, even the most sluggish, of anything agreeable."—p. 324.

After this, the author need not be afraid of being thought to mean more than he has said; the danger is, that, saying so much, he will be thought to mean nothing at all; which, perhaps, would be his best apology.

Of Claude, Salvator, and Gaspar:—

"There is no evidence of their ever having gone to Nature with any thirst, or received from her such emotion as could make them even for an instant lose sight of themselves; there is in them neither earnestness nor humility; there is no simple or honest record of any single truth; none of the plain words nor straight efforts that men speak and make when they once feel."—p. 76.

And much more of such general denial of all capacity for what they undertook, which, even where the denial is limited, in terms to their truth, is attributed to an incapacity which leaves no room for the acknowledgment of any other merit.

The author claims to have formed these strange opinions, if such words really denote any, from a "familiar acquaintance with every important work of art from Antwerp to Naples;" and yet, by his own admission, he was ignorant, when he wrote the last of the foregoing extracts, of one of the most important pictures of Ruysdael in the Louvre; and one of the very character in which he had sagacity enough to know that Ruysdael could paint well enough to compel praise even from him. "I wish Ruysdael had painted one or two rough seas. I believe, if he had, he might have saved the unhappy public from much *victimizing*, both in mind and pocket; for he would have shown that Vandevelde and Backhuysen were not quite sea-deities." After the first edition had been published, Murray's Hand-Book, the commonest traveller's guide, pointed out to him just the picture he had wished for; and just where everybody else who had visited the Louvre had stopped to admire it. Of its size, and i

is not small, there is not one in the gallery more conspicuous, either in position or character. Not the grandest effort of Italian art ever filled us more completely with the conception of the artist and the sentiment of the subject. The irresistible power of waters ; the blinding violence of the wind ; the lonely isolation of the inhabitants of the cottage, close shut against the storm, which scatters the spray over its thatched roof ; the peril of the vessel near the shore, and the noble resistance of the one in the offing, are all as plainly told as if we heard and saw the scene itself. Now, why did not the author see this before ? Simply because he was not looking for excellence among the Dutch masters,—not even in sea painting. “He had passed many days in the Louvre before the above passage was written, but had not been in the habit of pausing long anywhere except in the two last rooms containing the pictures of the Italian school.” And if it was so in the Louvre, which is rich in Dutch pictures, was it not so in other galleries ? and if so, why did he not confine himself to a condemnation of the Italian school ? We do not admit his excuse, when he says of this omission, that “he does not consider it as in anywise fitting him for the task he has undertaken, that for every hour passed in galleries he has passed days on the sea-shore.” We admit and feel that he is a good judge of nature ; but we want what he undertakes in this book to give ; we want his careful and candid judgment of pictures. Having admitted, by way of prophesying, this power in Ruysdael, when he supposed it had never been exercised, it is amusing to observe the unwilling praise with which he follows up this discovery of it in his last edition :—

“There is a sea piece of Ruysdael’s in the Louvre, which, though nothing very remarkable in any quality of art, is, at least, forceful, agreeable, and, as far as it goes, natural ; the waves have much freedom of action and power of color ; the wind blows hard over the shore ; and the whole picture may be studied with profit, as a proof that the deficiency of color and everything else in Backhuysen’s works is no fault of the Dutch sea.”—p. 340.

He really seems to forget that this Dutch sea was painted by one of those two painters whose best works he still persists in pronouncing so cold and valueless, that he knows not how to address

those who like such painting, nor what their sensations are respecting the sea. We want no better, though we should like a little heartier, praise of a sea storm, than he has given to this picture ; and being admitted to be so good, we think it might be "studied with profit, as a proof" that this author is a very inconsistent and prejudiced critic.

His inconsistencies arise partly from carelessness and a passionate impatience of revisal, and partly from his laboring to make out a case rather than to find out the truth. We do not charge this to any worse motive than prejudice. We have no doubt that he has a very earnest, though very ill-considered, conviction of the truth of his cause ; and if he had not been afraid to give his book an honest and cool revision, his asperities and extravagances might have disappeared under the influence of his better judgment. But standing, as they do, uncorrected after two editions, they ought entirely to destroy our reliance upon the mere opinions of the author, because they show a state of mind wholly unfitted for the task he has undertaken. He proposes to overthrow the judgment of centuries and of all civilized nations upon a question which, so far as it is one of fact, must yet depend on mere opinion ; for resemblance to nature, though a fact, cannot be proved—but is chiefly a question of pure taste. Now, before we can have any confidence in the result of such an inquiry, we must feel that it is pursued in perfect good faith ; in that good faith which includes freedom from violent prejudice and passion, as well as from intention to deceive. Certainly, no opinion, whether upon a point of fact or of taste, is too old to be questioned ; but things that the world has long acquiesced in are entitled to a strong presumption of their correctness, and nothing more so than a mere question of taste. Facts are handed down from generation to generation, often without examination, and, as they stand on evidence, posterity frequently gains new means of correcting them. But in matters of taste, every generation passes a fresh judgment upon the whole case, and, after long concurrence of opinion, they should be questioned with great modesty. The whole early Roman history has been, in our own days, pronounced to be fabulous, and no one impeaches the learned author of presumption ; but it would be a very different thing to deny the genius of Shakspeare or Milton. And to begin,

or even to end, the most ingenious argument to the point, by calling them fools and blockheads, would be mere impudence, and would only show the author to be a very unfit person to enter upon any such inquiry. There is abundance of talent in this book to insure it a careful consideration, however fearlessly, if modestly and fairly, it might have examined established opinions. But it does no such thing. It does not consider them worth examining. It simply asserts, dictates, and dogmatizes in a very heated and clever style; heaps epithets of contempt upon the works and understandings of the old masters, and treats all who differ from the author as absolute idiots; and if it treats them with any respect, it is that "due to honest, hopeless, helpless imbecility." It makes great pretensions, indeed, to demonstrating these opinions in a manner "which ought to involve no more reference to authority or character than a demonstration in Euclid." But there is not, and from the nature of the case there cannot be, a word of demonstration in the whole of it—taking the word, as he uses it, in the sense of proof. The subject is obviously all a matter of taste and judgment. Even the question of mere fidelity of imitation is notoriously one of opinion only, in which we continually hear people differ in judging of the same work of art. A fact agreed on, or a fact proved, is itself a proof of opinions or of other facts; but a fact asserted is no proof of anything. Now the difficulty with this author's facts is, not only that they are neither admitted nor proved, but that many of them are absolutely untrue.

For example, the old landscape-painters are loudly and repeatedly condemned as having been convicted of a want of the truth of nature because they made the trunks of their trees taper from the ground to the lowest branch, and their branches from fork to fork; whereas the author states, as an unquestionable fact, that a tree in its natural growth never tapers at all, but simply divides its bulk as it throws off its branches. He states the fact thus:—"Neither the stems nor the boughs of any of the ordinary trees of Europe taper, except where they fork. Whenever a stem sends off a branch, or a branch a lesser bough, or a lesser bough a bud, the stem or the branch is on the instant less in diameter by the exact quantity of the branch or bough they have sent off, and they remain of the same diameter, or, if there be any change, rather

increase than diminish, until they send off another branch or bough. This law is imperative and without exception," &c. Now this is what the author calls demonstration; and so far as it goes, which is little enough if true, it sounds very like it, to those who believe the fact to be as stated. But the weakness of the proof is simply the falsehood of the fact. It is not true, that, either universally or generally, trees do not taper in their trunks and branches,—but quite the reverse. Let any one, if he does not already know by daily observation and cannot see it the moment he looks, measure fifty trees, and he will hardly find one that does not taper; not regularly, indeed, because many accidents give irregular and highly picturesque forms to trees; but he will find the law of the natural growth of a tree to be, that from the time it leaves the ground it begins to taper, and tapers out to its extremities. Near the ground, it diminishes rapidly; near the insertion of the lowest branches, it frequently increases as rapidly, but still gradual diminution is the general law.

We speak of this fact with confidence, because we have for this purpose, unnecessary as it may seem, observed and measured a great number of trees, and we confess, without any fear of provoking a repetition of the author's shining remark on that subject to another of his critics, that some of them were birch-trees. If he had contented himself with objecting to the unnatural degree in which those particular trees of Claude and Gaspar which he specifies are made to taper, we should have agreed with him, that it was faulty in taste; but nothing less than a charge of violating a universal law of nature satisfies his eagerness in fault-finding. Yet he does not quite venture to leave the matter as he has stated it; and as he knows that every eye which looks at nature will detect the error, and that any one may see it even in the engravings of Turner's illustrations so often cited in this book, he admits, that as branches and buds put forth and decay, they give a slight and delicate *appearance* of tapering to the trunk, and a much greater one to the branches, leaving only slight excrescences to denote the cause of it. Now the fact is not true even thus modified, for trees do ordinarily taper where there are no excrescences whatever to mark decayed branches. And if it were not so does not the admission take away the whole force of the objection? If the tree *appears* to taper, it should be painted ta-

pering, whatever be the cause of the appearance, or rather of the fact.

This may seem too trifling a matter to be pursued at such length, but it is a specimen of the kind of assertion that runs through the whole book, and which is called demonstration. It consists of the denial of the truth of the works of the old masters, and the assertion of that quality in Turner's, in a great variety of particulars. Now this is perhaps the most difficult, though not, as it is here discussed, the most important, question in art. What is truth? There are certain physical and scientific truths involved in painting, about which there can be no dispute. But that truth which consists in mere resemblance must for ever be liable to question. Resemblance, especially in landscape, can never be perfect; or at most, only in a few subordinate objects. If any one does not see that the sky in any one of its phases, its unfathomable depth of blue, or its glorious company of clouds, or the sea, or even the most insignificant rivulet, cannot be truly painted, let him look attentively at a tree,—one of our wide-spreading, low-drooping elms, for example,—and say whether all the skill that could be learned and the labor that could be bestowed, in the compass of any one life, could imitate with exactness its complexity of form and mystery of color, its thousand arms branching in every direction, yet all preserving the same specific character of departure and of tendency, its mass of foliage of perhaps a hundred feet in depth, and yet so loose that the light sparkles through the very centre, and the birds pass without ruffling a feather. The human face, in all its variety of expression, presents not half the difficulty of execution.

Now as this, and all other principal objects in landscape, cannot be imitated exactly, the attempt to give a greater degree of resemblance to insignificant things, such as stones and flowers, would only defeat the purpose of the artist, by making us more sensible of the deficiency where it is more important. "As selection and generalization," says Mr. Eastlake, "are the qualities in which imitation, as opposed to nature, is strong, so the approach to literary rivalry is, as usual, in danger of betraying comparative weakness." A stone, a flower, or the trunk of a tree in the foreground may, by the exercise of a very extraordinary kind of dexterity, be so imitated that the deception shall be

almost perfect. But every good artist would purposely avoid any such degree of resemblance, because it would be impossible to carry it through the picture: and the deficiency is never felt, even in the roughest sketch, if all parts have the same degree of finish, "and could imitation be carried to absolute perfection, we should only be reminded that life and motion were wanting." Resemblance, then, is necessarily imperfect throughout the picture. But how much of it is necessary, or even admissible, to constitute the truth of art, is obviously a very difficult question. Now on this it becomes no man to dogmatize; it is a question of taste and feeling as well as of judgment, and can be settled only by a wide and long consent.

And to make the little more or the little less of this resemblance the criterion of art is just the mistake made by the author now under consideration. He denies the merit of the old landscape-painters because they are not "true to nature,"—because their clouds are not such as he sees daily pass over his head,—because their mountains have not the outline which geology requires, and their rocks have not the proper indications of their mineralogical class,—because their trees taper too much in the trunks, and do not form their heads in geometrical curves. Now all this may in a degree be true, and yet those works may deserve all that ever has been claimed for them; because they may have excellences infinitely more important than this "truth of nature." If they have not, we give them over to the author's condemnation, and not even the most perfect fidelity to this truth ought to save them. If there be nothing better in landscape-painting than this kind of likeness-taking of clouds, rocks, and trees, it is of very little importance who does it best;—it is not worth doing at all, except as a gentleman may fancy to have his prospect painted, as he would his dog or his horse; in all which cases he is but adorning his house with a better kind of upholstery. This is not art. Art is nature, but it is something more and better than nature,—as much better as the work of a creative mind is better than the work of accident. For the purpose of pictorial composition all natural effects are but accidents; and though sometimes we think we see them so perfect that art could add nothing to their excellence, yet every artist knows that nature never made a landscape from which something should not be taken away, or to which something

should not be added, to present in its most perfect form the prevailing sentiment of the scene.

Violations of physical laws, however, are not in our author's judgment necessarily faults. It depends in a great degree upon the person who commits them. Of all that later generation of old masters which comprehends the landscape-painters, Rubens is the only one of whose landscapes he speaks with respect. Now we think that no one, who has examined the works of the two, can fail to have formed the opinion that Turner is indebted to Rubens for his peculiar system. It is the system of a great colorist carrying the whole force of a palette set for flesh, and gorgeous draperies, and jewels, into the broad fields of air and earth. Color runs riot over the landscapes of Rubens. Everything is in joyous motion, like the fresh-breaking waves of the sea. He never seems willing to part with the successive hues of earth, but often runs his horizon up until he loses all perspective. Turner never commits this fault; but his daring use of color upon subjects which, to other artists, have seemed not to admit of it,—his substitution of color for light, we might almost say his absolute manufacture of light,—we think he owes to an attentive study of Rubens. In this particular of the use of color for light, the author does gross injustice to Turner, and betrays his own poverty of eye, when he praises him for adopting white for the highest light and black for the deepest shade. Nothing can, to our judgment, be less characteristic of Turner, who is, both by nature and by system, a great colorist. What led us to make these remarks was the very different manner in which the author speaks of Rubens and of Claude, when they both paint physical impossibilities. Of Rubens he says, in the offensive slang in which much of this book is written, that the licenses taken by him are as bold "*as his general statements are sincere*,"—that in one of his landscapes the horizon is an oblique line, in another, many of the shadows fall at right angles to the light, and in another, a rainbow is seen by the spectator at the side of the sun. "These bold and frank licenses," he says, "are not to be considered as detracting from the rank of the painter; they are usually characteristic of those minds whose grasp of nature is so certain and extensive as to enable them fearlessly to sacrifice a truth of actuality to a truth of feeling." And again: "I have

before noticed the license of Rubens in making his horizon an oblique line. His object is to carry the eye to a given point in the distance. The road winds to it, the clouds fly at it, the trees nod to it, a flock of sheep scamper towards it, a carter points his whip at it, his horses pull for it, the figures push for it, and the horizon slopes to it. *If the horizon had been horizontal, it would have embarrassed everything and everybody.*" Now this may be a good parody on the history of A — Apple-pie; but as sober criticism, it is very ridiculous.

But let us see what our author thinks of these licenses, when taken by those who happen not to be in favor with him. In another part of the book, in describing a landscape of Claude, he says that "the setting sun casts a long stream of light upon the water obliquely from the side to the centre of the picture." It is true that this is a thing impossible, because the stream of reflected light is always a continuation of the perpendicular line from the sun to the horizon. But Claude, whatever his other faults may have been, cannot be accused of not having studied the effect of the setting sun on water, as his pictures abound with it; this, however, is attributed at once to his ignorance:—"But if this had been done as a license, it would be an instance of most absurd and unjustifiable license, as the fault is detected by the eye in a moment, and there is no occasion nor excuse for it." Now, so far from this mistake or license, be it which it may, being so palpable as to be detected by the eye in a moment, we doubt if half the world now knows that it is wrong; and the author himself states, in a note on the very same page, that it has been defended as a truth by a man of much taste and information, and also in a recent publication. But we imagine that a rainbow by the side of the sun, shadows at right angles to it, and a slanting horizontal line, would be detected by any eye, and would hardly find a defender as "truths of actuality." So true it is that one man may steal a horse, where another may not look over a hedge.

Besides this inconsistency as to obvious departures from nature, it is impossible to find in this book any fixed principle on the subject of what is called the truth of nature. Who can tell what are the author's notions of the propriety of minute detail in subordinate parts, on comparing such passages as these? After praising Titian for painting every stamen of the wild roses in

the foreground of his Ariadne, and Raphael for expressing every leaf and blossom of the colewort in that of his Miraculous Draught of Fishes, he says—"It appears, then, not only from natural principles, but from the highest of all authority, that thorough knowledge of the lowest details and full expression of them is right even in the highest class of historical painting; that *it will not take away from nor interfere with the interest of the figures;*" and much more to the same purpose; and that Sir Joshua Reynolds is false in principle, when he praises Titian because, in the foreground of the Peter Martyr, the plants are discriminated just as much as was necessary for variety, and no more. Yet, in another place, he says, that, if we paint a piece of drapery as part of the dress of a Madonna, "all ideas of richness or texture become thoroughly contemptible, and unfit to occupy the mind at the same moment with the idea of the Virgin. The conception of drapery is then to be suggested by the simplest and slightest means possible, and all notions of texture and detail are to be rejected with utter reprobation, *because they draw the attention to the dress instead of the saint, and disturb and degrade the feelings,*" &c.; and that "all that Sir Joshua Reynolds has said on the subject of the kind of truths proper to be represented is perfectly just and right." Now what difference can there be between these two cases of the flowers in the foreground and the drapery of the saint, both being mere accessories to the principal figure? Surely, if minute finish and detail are objectionable in either, it would seem to be in the flowers, which are removed from the figure, rather than in the drapery, which is a part of it. And how can Sir Joshua Reynolds be both right and wrong in this same opinion?

Another strange inconsistency in this book is, that the general and most labored charge against the old masters is, as we have already stated, a want of truth; that they do not truly represent the natural appearances of sky, mountains, rocks, trees, earth, or water; and yet they are repeatedly said to have no other object in view in their painting than deception. Now we do not say that deceptive painting is necessarily true; on the contrary, it is almost always untrue. But it is incompatible with that want of minute detail, that preference of general to specific resemblance, which is one of the principal forms in which the want

of truth is here stated. The charge of aiming at deception is, moreover, taken by itself, one of the most grossly unfounded that could be made. We can hardly believe that any one who could prefer it against Salvator or Gaspar had ever seen their works. As applied to Claude, though more plausible, it is equally unjust. The prevailing defect in the two former is just the reverse of this. It is the want of sufficient attention to the specific character of objects; and if the author has convinced us of anything, it is of this. Claude carried imitation as far, perhaps, as it is possible in landscape; yet the idea of deception in one of his pictures, we believe, never before entered into any one's mind. What is the meaning of the phrase? We have seen flies and water-drops in a flower-piece, and even the flowers themselves, so minutely painted as to be almost mistaken for reality. This is deceptive painting, and a very petty business it is. But how is this to be attempted in landscape? What hope could an artist have, if he desired it, that his canvas of perhaps four feet by three should be mistaken for the wide face of nature,—that his trees, at most two feet high, should really pass for giant pines and sturdy oaks,—his cliffs, which overhang their base perhaps six inches, for alpine precipices? Besides, the attempt at deception must necessarily destroy all imagination of grandeur. Trees would be made to look like real shrubs, and crags like real pebbles. Not that there cannot positively be any such thing, where the representation is of less than the size of nature; we have seen minute interiors in which that folly was carried to great perfection. By means of a partial light, they are made to look more like models than pictures. But this is obviously impossible in landscape, and we never saw one that had the least appearance of such a design. We have seen, too, a great deal of labor worse than wasted in foregrounds, by giving to plants and pebbles a minute finish wholly inappropriate to the *distance* of the picture, and which is sure to put all the rest of it out of keeping by the impossibility of carrying it further out under the broad light of heaven. But it is the want of this very finish, and not the excess of it, that is here repeatedly charged against these artists. What the author means by accusing them of aiming at deception we have tried in vain to comprehend, either from anything he has said, or that we have observed, or

can imagine. It seems to us to be only a desperate attempt to escape from difficulties in which he felt himself involved by his rambling and inconsistent course of censure.

We do not propose to remark upon all the merely untenable and extravagant general propositions laid down by the author; but there are two, which he supports by such odd reasons, that we will state them briefly as specimens of the kind of logic which satisfies his mind. He denies the doctrine of Sir Joshua Reynolds, and of all other writers on the subject, that the truth sought to be expressed by art should be, not particular, but general truth; that is, that a picture should not be a collection of portraits of particular persons or particular things. Now this doctrine is undoubtedly just. Nature, in her vast extent and variety, can afford to mark every face and every object with a strong individuality, which, in the limited space and unvarying character of a picture, would soon become very tiresome. The artist, therefore, is obliged to resort to a general expression of the class, instead of the individual; and this, when it seeks the beautiful, is what is called the ideal. A man,—nay, even a woman,—with a very large nose, may notwithstanding be beautiful, because we see it sometimes in profile, and sometimes in front, and sometimes not at all; but in a picture such a feature would be a continual and disagreeable mark for the eye. We should be, like Sancho, always looking at that great nose. And the same thing would be true, though in a less degree, of a rock or a tree; we should soon become weary of the sameness of any very marked individuality. But all this our author denies, maintaining that particular truths are more important, and therefore more proper to be painted, than general ones; and he thus reasons it out syllogistically :—

“If I say that all men in China eat, I say nothing interesting, because my predicate (eat) is general. If I say that all men in China eat opium, I say something interesting, because my predicate (eat opium) is particular. Now almost everything, which (with reference to a given subject) a painter has to ask himself whether he shall represent or not, is a predicate. Hence, in art, particular truths are usually more important than general ones.”

Now the utter absurdity of this argument is, that the fact that

all men eat in China is uninteresting, not because it is a general fact, but because everybody knew it before ; and the fact that all men in China eat opium, if true, would be interesting only to those who did not know it before. So it is not the particularity, but the novelty, of the fact that makes it interesting ; and a general fact may be as new as a particular one, and then it would be not less, but more interesting ; as a new general law of nature would be more interesting, because more important to us than a new solitary fact, supposing it to be one in which we had no personal interest.

We admit that this answer does not apply to the assertion, that objects of peculiar forms and colors are more interesting in actual nature than those of more general occurrence, but only to this argument, and to the proposition which is sought to be proved by it. That fact may be, and probably is, so. But whether it be or not, it is a very different question whether such things are therefore more proper for painting ; and we have just endeavored to show that they are not. But be that as it may, the argument is not less absurd which reasons from facts of history to the appearances of visible things. If the author will call the representation of an object a "statement of a fact," as he repeatedly does, he may as well call the form and color of it "predicates ;" but it would be much simpler and better, where one means to tell the truth and to be understood, to call things by their right names.

Again, the author contends that form is more important in painting than color ; and he proves it thus :—

"According to Locke, Book II. ch. 8, there are three sorts of qualities in bodies ; first, the 'bulk, figure, number, situation, and motion or rest of their solid parts,—those that are in them, whether we perceive them or not.' These he calls primary qualities. Secondly, 'the power that is in any body to operate after a peculiar manner on any of our senses' (sensible qualities). And thirdly," &c. "Now, by Locke's definition, above given, only bulk, figure, situation, and motion or rest of solid parts are primary qualities. Hence all truths of color sink at once into the second rank. He, therefore, who has neglected a truth of form for a truth of color has neglected a greater truth for a less one."

Now, if this childish pedantry proves anything, it proves that objects ought to be painted of no color at all; color being, according to Locke, not in the object, but in the eye. But of what importance is that? The painter is concerned with the appearance of things, not with their philosophical essences.

But we shall follow the author no further; it has not been our object to refute his opinions respecting the comparative value of the old and modern landscapes, because, so far as resemblance to nature is concerned, the facts which he asserts, and on which he mainly relies, are not of a kind capable of proof or of refutation. We can prove that a rainbow is wrong, if it be by the side of the sun,—or a shadow, if it be at right angles to it; but the want of truth in the forms and colors of clouds, mountains, rocks, trees, and water, unless the departure be violent, must remain a matter of opinion. And when he asserts the departure to be violent and habitual, he asserts a fact which, if true, is obvious to everybody, and yet it is here stated for the first time, to anything like the same extent, for two hundred years. And so far as it is a question, not of resemblance, but of other qualities, such as harmony of forms and colors, invention and sentiment, we can only say we differ from him, and endeavor to show from the exaggerated and violent tone of his remarks, and his want of consistency, that, in a matter in which he sets up his own opinion against that of so many others, he is not entitled to the personal confidence which we yield to a sober and modest critic; and that it is safer to suppose that he is misled by passion or prejudice, than that so many have been wrong before him who have appeared to judge coolly and candidly.

Against all this, we are quite willing to admit, is to be placed his evident ability and familiarity with the subject. The parts of the book not infected by these peculiar opinions are extremely valuable; his remarks on the painting of sky and water are particularly admirable; and, indeed, there are scattered throughout the book so many just and novel observations, that, notwithstanding its absurd partialities, we know none more useful to the landscape-painter who will read it with a proper allowance for them.

After doing this justice to the author's ability, though we feel

under no obligation to account for his singular opinions, it will certainly be more agreeable, and probably more just, if, without charging him with any unworthy motives as a personal partisan, we can attribute them to some other cause. And it is but the first step that we need to seek, for he has evidently conceit and passion enough to account for all the rest. Now we think it pretty evident, though he has not so stated, that he is an amateur in water-colors,—that feeble substitute for painting, which has done much to ruin English art and English taste. He claims in his preface to have been “devoted from his youth to the laborious study of practical art;” but the person to whom the work is commonly attributed is unknown as a professional artist, and we think the whole character of it belongs to the sketcher, and not to the painter. It wants the deep and artist-like feeling that is incompatible with this dabbling in water upon drawing-paper. If Michael Angelo could say of oil, that it was only fit for women and children in comparison with fresco, what would he have said at seeing “the greatest and only perfect landscape-painter” spending his days before a drawing-board upon a table, washing in lakes and bistre with a camel’s-hair pencil and scraping out lights with a penknife? We have said that this water-painting has ruined the art in England; and how can it be otherwise, when prices that would well remunerate an artist for solid and manly pictures in oil are paid in profusion for these mere conventional sketches in the most feeble and perishable material? We do not mean to underrate the difficulty of these trifles, but to deny their value, when done. We doubt not that the mechanical skill required for drawing in water-color is even greater than for painting in oil or fresco. But then one person can do it almost as well as another, if he will but give time enough to it. In point of mere execution, which we confess we think the principal merit these things can have, we have seen such drawings by a fashionable lady that we thought quite as good as those which are here exalted above the works of Claude, Gaspar, and Salvator. We doubt not, nay, we know, that in this we show our own ignorance; for we do not profess to be learned nor to have any deep taste in this paper-staining, though we have seen a great deal of it, and Turner’s among the rest. But we do know, that if art is

to be brought down to such a standard, it is no longer worth contending for.

Perhaps, however, we have not yet sufficiently informed our readers that all this clamor for the supremacy of the modern artists is founded upon so much beauty and grandeur as can be comprehended in a sheet of drawing-paper, and expressed by the colors of Reeves's or Newman's paint-boxes ; just the thing that girls are taught to do at boarding-schools tolerably well, and which the well-educated ladies and gentlemen of England, to their great credit, frequently do most admirably. Nineteen twentieths of the modern pictures here preferred to the works of the old masters are mere water-color drawings ; this whole book is devoted to establishing their supremacy over the best productions of antiquity. Mr. Turner is, it is true, not a water-color painter only. He has painted masterly things in oil ; but that was long ago ; his recent works in that way are but a kind of imitation of water-colors, made grotesque by the strength of the material ; and so far does our author's prejudice carry him in favor of what we suppose to be his own practice, that even his admiration of Turner gives way before it. He will hardly allow any merit to his earlier and really magnificent oil paintings, called here "academical pictures," apparently to avoid too obvious a preference for water over oil. His Temple of Jupiter and other Italian compositions are dismissed as "nonsense pictures,"—for no reason that we can understand, except that they are immeasurably beyond the capacity of water-colors.

There is no single fact that seems to us so indicative of the hopeless decline of art in England as the positive mania there is for these feeble sketches. It pervades France too, as well as England. One has only to go into the several exhibitions of water-color painters that are open every year in London, and see the multitude of these productions, and how soon the word "sold" is marked upon them, and learn what prices are paid, to be satisfied that it is vain to contend with such people for anything better in art. It is the same in Paris. Thousands of francs are paid for little water-color drawings, while Couture's magnificent painting of the Banquet in the Decline of Rome, which we were unfortunate enough to see only in an unfinished state, went out of

the last *Exposition* without finding a purchaser. This is but one phase of that egotistical spirit of modern times that has followed the march of wealth and of a wide and superficial education, and which is for other reasons fatal to art. Those who are able to buy pictures buy that which flatters their vanity; they or their children paint in water-colors, and they are unwilling to exalt that art which is hopelessly above their reach; or at least, they have looked so long on their own domestic manufactures, that they have lost all sensibility to anything better. This may sound strange to those who do not know how universal an accomplishment of polite life this water-color drawing has become, and to what perfection it is carried both by amateurs and artists. But we really believe it is one of the most formidable enemies that landscape art has now to encounter, so much does it absorb the patronage and degrade the taste of the rich. It is some consolation, however, that since Count d'Orsay paints in oil, it may possibly become the fashion to paint and to buy paintings; but the change would give a sore lesson to the vanity of amateurship.

We do not mean to be understood to question the value of water-color to the landscape-painter as a preparative; there is no other material in which sketches can be made with sufficient rapidity to catch the fleeting effects of light and color. A thorough facility in it should be a part of the education of every landscape-painter, but to be used only as a kind of short-hand to preserve hints which may recall facts. To substitute it for oil is like going back from phonetic writing to hieroglyphics. It is necessarily either merely conventional in its own way, or, if more is sought from it, it becomes a poor imitation of that which is done much better, and to the same extent much easier, in oils. This is the difference between the English water-colors and the French. The English are simply, but beautifully conventional. The best of them aim at nothing more; indeed, so unlike nature are they in fact, that it requires some use to be able to relish them; and then, like all objects of an artificial taste, they acquire a factitious value beyond that which is naturally agreeable. A truly good landscape in oils is a thing of which the most uncultivated mind at once perceives the beauty. Place the most ignorant person before one of Claude's pictures, or even one of Gaspar's,

—for perhaps Salvator is somewhat too poetical,—and he will feel it at once, as he would a beautiful scene in nature. But give such a person one of Turner's, or Fielding's, or Harding's water-colors, and it is probable he will not know even what it is intended to represent. Those blotches of color, which, to the amateur, seem so exquisite in tone and position, and which recall clouds and woods and deep pools of dark water among the hills, will to him appear like unmeaning accidents. This by no means diminishes the value of such a sketch to the artist. He sees in it the embryo picture in all its beautiful and natural harmony and detail. But this is not the use now made of them. They do not assist, but supersede, painting; and those who have learned this handwriting on the wall, and the interpretation thereof, insist upon it that it is superior to that of which it is but the feeble type. We have heard them say, that, whatever advantages oil may have, it can never make a transparent picture. And they learn to see all nature, or to think they do, as if it were thinly washed over white. But the difficulty with water-color is, that it can never make anything but a transparent picture, while in oils objects are made opaque or transparent, according to the truth of the fact.

At the proper distance, the canvas or other *subjectile* of a well-painted picture is never seen or felt to exist; though its grey tone, where it is hardly covered, is often, in the works of the old masters, used as color, with a felicity which could not be reached by any superadded tint. But in the most highly finished water-color drawing, no one, whose eye has not been taught not to perceive it, can fail to see the all-pervading white paper through rocks and mountains, as well as through sky and water. To talk of any absolute resemblance to nature in such a material seems quite absurd. Yet so tenacious are its advocates, that they almost excommunicated Harding, one of the ablest of their school, for introducing the use of an opaque white for his high lights, in aid of the clumsy process of digging into the paper for them. However striking the effect and spirited the touch thus engrafted by him on the feebleness of the general work, it was thought a kind of treason against their craft, and a debauching of the pure transparency of water-colors. In truth, they saw it was the first step towards an abandonment of it; and we are glad to say that

we last saw Mr. Harding before an easel, with a palette of good stiff oil-colors on his thumb.

The necessarily limited size, too, of water-color drawings, which can hardly be successfully extended beyond the largest sheet of drawing-paper,—or, at least, practically are not so, but, on the contrary, are usually of much smaller dimensions,—renders this preference of them to the large works of the old masters still more preposterous. Magnitude, not only of the thing represented, but of the representation itself, is essential to the higher effects of art, especially in landscape. A statuette, or a miniature historical picture, never looks like anything higher than a sketch for a statue or a painting. We have become accustomed, indeed, to *genre* painting on a small scale, in which the familiarity of the scenes calls upon the imagination for no grand emotions; and although we cannot paint landscape on a scale as large as nature's, yet the nearer we approach to it, the finer will be the effect. The illuminated dome of St. Peter's may be grand in the distance of a picture, though it be painted on a scale which makes it in fact hardly bigger than a man's hat, because that would require a large landscape, over which the eye must wander to comprehend the whole, something in the manner required by nature; but when that same object in a little picture shows, to use Fanny Kemble's ingenious simile, "like a gold thimble," it may be beautiful, but it cannot be grand. In like manner, it is preposterous to compare all that even Turner can do upon a sheet of paper with the Guadagni Salvators, which, though the objects are necessarily far below the scale of nature, are of the largest class of landscape; by that simple circumstance they do not, indeed, create emotions of sublimity, but they prepare the mind to be excited to them by the magnificence of the designs.

Moreover, the difficulty and the merit of a picture are in some proportion to its size; the larger the scale the stronger are the powers required to act upon it, the more obvious will be the faults, if any, and the bolder must be both the design and the execution. No one can see the immense pictures of the Venetian school, without feeling that they are the works of giants. Who but Titian, Paul Veronese, and Tintoretto could have mastered such fields of space? And what conceivable power could preserve the grandeur, or even the beauty, of the Assumption, the

Presentation, or the Marriage of Cana, within the compass of a drawing-board? The case is not equally strong when applied to landscape, because this was never painted on so large a scale, nor, we confess, with such transcendent power; but, applying it to the Baptism, and the Preaching of St. John, in the Guadagni palace, the attempt of this author to degrade them below the best of water-colors can only be the effect of extreme prejudice.

We repeat, that we do not mean to charge him with wilfully misrepresenting the comparative merit of these works, but to state our belief, that, being himself a sketcher in water-colors, while his observation of nature has, by that practice, become exceedingly acute, he has become insensible to the higher qualities of art. The habit of a water-color sketcher is, to copy, in his own conventional way, just what he sees and no more. He rarely ventures on composition; his delight is a real *bit*, and his idea of high art is an *effect*, or at most a *view*. He thinks he is making pictures, when he is only collecting materials; and when he looks upon a painting as a critic, he applies to it a standard like his who showed a brick as a sample of his house. He seeks only for the picturesque; he has no feeling for the ideal; he never finds it by the road-side, and it never enters into his sketch-book. His is the love of that truth of nature of which we read so much in this book,—just those little truths which an artist drops by the way, as he proceeds, because they interfere with the great truths, equally those of nature, but of a higher aim, which it is his purpose to represent.

If the author had been more faithful to this love of actual and particular nature than to water-colors, he would have done better justice to Constable, who was the most thoroughly true, as the word is here used, of all modern landscape-painters. But he was a mere *naturalist*; his pictures are not sketches, nor are they all portraits; but the parts of which they are composed, and the general effect of the whole, are wonderfully natural. He failed in many of his attempts at rendering the more difficult effects of light, particularly that of the glittering reflection of the noonday sun on foliage; and this has spoiled some of his best pictures, making them look as if they had been overtaken by a snow-storm in June. Yet the effect even in that is true, so far as white paint can represent light; but it disturbs everything else by

its intensity ; and this is just one of those truths that the *naturalist* and the sketcher try to copy, and the artist omits.

Having thus stated our general dissent from this author's comparison of the merits of the old landscape-painters with those of the particular modern school which he seeks to elevate above them, we will say a few words for ourselves on the same subject.

Landscape-painting, as a separate department, sprang up in the decline of art, or rather, after its first decline, and in the attempt of the Eclectics to revive it. Among those great masters who lived in the first half of the sixteenth century, and who carried historical painting to a height which it has never since reached, and which we believe it never can reach again, Titian alone painted a few landscapes. Lionardo, Raphael, and Correggio never attempted, in this manner, anything more than backgrounds to their figures. Of Tintoretto, though the author calls him a landscape-painter, we recollect no work of this class. The landscapes of Titian are too grand, and too far removed from ordinary nature, to come in competition with the author's favorite school. He carried into them that "dignity" which Sir Joshua Reynolds so aptly ascribed to his historical pictures. He disdains to notice trifling effects of light or color. He moves like a giant among primeval forests and primitive mountains. His skies have a depth of azure more awful than the thundercloud. His trees are the only ones that ever were painted, unless we except those of an eminent artist of our own time and country, which have the true expression of vegetable life,—that expression of choice and will in throwing out their branches and bending their trunks, in search of the vital light, which gives to nature's trees such picturesque forms and such an almost human character. The same mystery of color, that, independently of all form, touches on the sublime in his figures, pervades his landscapes. What his great contemporaries might have accomplished, if they had attempted to paint inanimate nature, we know not ; but we should find it difficult to believe that any one, even of them, could have approached the majesty of Titian. Perhaps the same simple but indefinite grandeur would not satisfy us in any one who wielded color with less of a magician's hand. The author's remarks, which we have already quoted, respecting the minute detail of the foreground in his Bacchus and Ariadne, give a very

false notion of his style of landscape; and indeed, the picture itself, which is in the National Gallery, is so unworthy of Titian, that we should not believe it to be justly ascribed to him but from deference to the authority of Sir Joshua Reynolds, who has made it the subject of comment without expressing any doubt of its genuineness. In tone and color, it is much more like the work of Giorgione, and in the action, if not in the drawing of the figures, it is quite unworthy of Titian; nothing can be more unlike him than those same wild roses, with every stamen picked out with a hair pencil. If it had been his purpose to express them at all, one stroke of his vigorous brush would have done it, so that, at the proper distance, it would have been ten times more like reality. This minute flower-painting may be found in many of the pictures of Raphael besides the Miraculous Draught of Fishes,—which last, it must, however, be remembered, grand as the design is, and all by his own hand, was but a pattern for tapestry-weavers. In many others, these subordinate parts were the work of his assistants, to whom he committed too much for his fame. The Coronation of the Virgin, in the Vatican, is an example of this, in which there is a tomb full of flowers painted in the same minute manner, which we think must shock every person of good taste who sees it. This part of the picture, however, is notoriously by Francesco Penni, and done after Raphael's death. The same thing, less offensive in degree, but more out of place, is seen in the foreground of the Transfiguration; that, too, was finished after the death of the great artist.

Still, it is not to be denied that such things exist from Raphael's own hand, or under his direction. But we do not remember any other example of it which we think fairly ascribable to Titian. It is not our present purpose to say which of the two would be the higher authority. Raphael has, by common consent, so long been called the prince of painters, that his claim to that rank should be doubted with the greatest modesty and deliberation. But—*Fortes ante Agamemnona*—perhaps the friend of Bembo and the favorite of the court of Leo stood a better chance for the throne than the companion of Aretine and of the Venetian nobility. Besides, he bore his faculties so meekly, has impressed upon his works such loveliness, and has left in his own portrait such an image of mild and half-melancholy beauty, that our

feelings, as much as our judgment, would be ready to enlist in his defence, if his title should be questioned. There is nothing personally so engaging in the vigorous old man, who died prematurely of the plague at the age of ninety-nine, as in the delicate youth who filled the world with his praise, and left it at that of thirty-seven. Men, as well as gods, love those that die young. But if we learn to love Raphael at Rome, we stand in awe of Titian at Venice. It is in our own idiosyncrasy, perhaps, but not all Michael Angelo's contorted vastness ever filled us with the sublime emotions we have felt in standing before the great works in the Venetian academy, and the glorious combination of history and landscape in the Peter Martyr. Nor have we felt, in the room where the Transfiguration was placed over the death-bed of Raphael, more of the lingering presence of genius, than in that where Titian died, and where his magnificent bust still seems to look with regret upon his unfinished works.

From Titian down to the first decline of art and its revival at Bologna towards the close of the sixteenth century, we do not remember a painter of landscapes on record, unless, perhaps, some of the works of Bassano may be so classed, for want of a better name to give to such heterogeneous assemblages. It is true that the extraordinarily long life of Titian extended through the greater part of this period; with the exception of Lionardo da Vinci, he was the oldest of the great painters, and Tintoretto alone survived him to connect the two great periods of painting.

In the eclectic school of Bologna, under the Carracci, landscape-painting rose to the rank of a distinct department of art. Annibale himself, and his followers, Domenichino, Guercino, and Albani, were the first, excepting Paul Brill, and perhaps other Flemings, whose works have very little merit, to make the landscape the principal and the figures but accessories. Domenichino and Guercino, however, had devoted themselves so much more to history, that the detail of their compositions in such subjects was very imperfect, though the general design and color were often masterly. It may in consequence be observed, that their best landscapes are those which are subordinate to the figures. It required a deeper study of the requisites of that kind of painting than they had found time for, to be able to depend upon inanimate nature alone for the light and shadow, the color and the

sentiment, of the picture ; this last quality is what they principally aimed at, and in this they were eminently successful, perhaps more so than is possible for an artist who makes the natural landscape his exclusive study. Of the landscape of Rubens, the contemporary of the scholars of the Carracci, we have already spoken ; it was not learned in that school, but is entirely of Flemish origin and character.

This brings us to the peculiar period of this branch of art, beginning with Nicolo Poussin, who may be called the father of it. This was in the first half of the seventeenth century, more than a hundred years after Raphael. Contemporary with Nicolo, and probably all in some degree, certainly one of them, very deeply indebted to him for their excellence in the art, were the three great landscape-painters, Gaspar, Claude, and Salvator. These are the old masters more particularly spoken of by this author with such contempt, and who have been before thought to have carried their art almost to perfection. After a careful examination of their works, repeated after the lapse of many years, and uninfluenced, as we believe, by their reputation, we venture to state our own opinion of their merit. They were evidently far inferior in genius to the old masters of history. The causes which enlisted those great men in the pursuit of art had already ceased to exist. Those who would otherwise have followed in their track had already, by the force of circumstances, been diverted to other occupations. Art was no longer the channel through which burst the impatience of genius ; it had found more attractive issues. The quiet spirits who loved speculation more than action became the artists of the day, and sought their inspiration in the solitude of nature and not in the turbulent workings of human passions.

Nicolo Poussin had rather a profound knowledge than any deep feeling of art, either in history or landscape. The first he painted on a diminutive scale, and principally on classical subjects,—strong both against any claim to the enthusiasm that produces great works. It is a just remark of this author, that a grand style can be formed only upon subjects of present interest. Such were the Gospel history and the legends of the church in the time of the earlier painters ; and such were not the Greek and Roman histories in that of David and his school. Nicolo's landscapes, too, were not

the free overflowings of a love of nature, but the labored productions of one who was too great a critic to be a poet. We respect rather than love him, and for his sake alone we should not enter these lists. His brother-in-law and pupil, Gaspar, was a very different artist. We know little about him personally, except that he had such an affection for his instructor as to have adopted his name, and submitted reverently to his teaching. In the classical drapery and antique attitudes of his shepherds, reclining like Tityrus and Melibœus in the shade, we recognise the mind if not the hand of his master ; but we see in the landscape the free and simple lover of nature loitering on the sunny hill-sides of Tivoli and Frascati. Of all the old painters, Gaspar in his designs is, in our judgment, at the same time the most natural and poetical. He does not, like Salvator, plunge you into a wilderness overhung by dank and dismal rocks and blasted trees, reflected in dark standing pools ; nor, like Claude, put nature to school under a great landscape-gardener ; but he seems to have gone out among the mountains with an honest purpose of gathering his materials from nature. He selects some point, generally by the side of an unfrequented road or the winding shore of some still water, from which he sees hills and woods chase each other behind distant towers and towns, until they slope down to the level sea, or break like waves at the foot of some blue chain of mountains. There he selects and condenses the choicest parts into one harmonious whole, with a skill in the management of his lines that has never been approached. For the harmony of lines, one of the most difficult and inexplicable beauties of art, he seems to have had an instinct, like that of Titian for color. In his most complicated designs, nothing can be changed without essentially injuring the composition. With the richest variety he joins an entire unity of purpose and feeling throughout the whole. There is a perfect probability about his scene ; his roads and streams never wind but to avoid some accidental obstruction, his buildings are appropriately placed, and his ground is broken as if the same natural causes had operated throughout. His eye was thoroughly trained, not by science, but by observation ; perhaps he could not have explained—certainly not so well as this author does—why a form was right or wrong ; but he felt it much better, and his feeling was a better guide than knowledge.

His skies are not good, simply as skies ; but we should hesitate before pronouncing them to be defects in the general arrangement. Great compromises must be made in landscape. With nothing better than white and yellow paint to express light with, it is necessary to use them with great economy. Nature can dress her landscape in the most vivid or the most delicate tints, and put directly over them the burning hues of sunset or the intense blue and white of noon. The artist has but the same earthy colors with which to express all this. If he attempts to imitate the splendor of the sky, he must expend upon it the whole power of his palette, and then he must proportionably lower the tones of all the rest of the picture. If he does this truly, he can represent nothing on earth brighter than a dim twilight. If he begin with the earth, he must again exhaust his palette, and then nothing is left for the sky. There must be a sacrifice of one or the other. To divide the deficiency equally between them would leave nothing which could fitly represent either. It was for this reason, and not from ignorance or incapacity, that the old masters of landscape apparently neglected their skies, or made them unnaturally deep in color to subdue their light ; and this also is the reason of the greater beauty of the skies which come in occasionally as backgrounds of the old historical pictures. These, the author says, "look as if they were painted by angels ;" but remove the same sky, which looks so bright and beautiful over the deep shadows and opaque lights of architecture, figures, and draperies, to the open landscape, and either its beauty will disappear, or it will extinguish the landscape. In this difficulty, the sky, as ordinarily the least important part in the composition, must be sacrificed. When we look at the natural landscape, the earth is the object of principal interest ; the sky is but the beautiful frame that sets it off. There are skies, indeed, that absorb our whole attention, but they cannot be painted ; and we have seen many skies so beautifully represented, that they destroyed the effect of the picture.

It must always be remembered that the legitimate object of landscape, as well as of other painting, is to transmit to the mind of the spectator the thoughts and feelings of the artist, and not merely to give a recognisable image of the scene that suggested them. A failure in the first can never be atoned for by any excellence in the last. And in this consists that excellence which

has given to Gaspar and Salvator their great fame. Although we would not apply the harsh and contemptuous language that abounds in this book to him who cannot so feel this excellence in them as not to forgive their want of minute accuracy, we must think his mind is either naturally insensible, or has been subject to the influence of a very bad system. We look at their landscapes as we do at nature, not to criticize the parts, but to enjoy the whole. We admit that it would have been better, if they had been more accurate; and we should have been under great obligations to this author, if he had pointed out their deficiencies with a proper sense of their merits; but to denounce them in the manner he has done is to do the greatest possible injury to art. "Respect for the ancients," he says, "is the salvation of art;" and it is so, because to overturn all long-established opinions upon it is to destroy all faith in it. The author may succeed in convincing some minds that the old masters are unworthy of their admiration, but he cannot transfer it to Turner and Fielding; if he can show that the art which has been revered for two centuries is almost worthless, he can hardly expect to elevate to its place that which has never secured more than a partial regard in its own day. The inference will be, that art is nothing permanent or real; that it is founded on no principle, but, like the fashion of our garments, or the decoration of our houses, is a caprice of the time.

What we have said of Gaspar leaves us little to say of Salvator. Different as they were in genius, their faults and their merits are of the same general kind. They selected different forms of nature, because they delighted in different emotions. We read their respective characters distinctly in their works. The author complains of the want of variety in their compositions, and praises Turner for never repeating the same idea. We think this but an equivocal kind of commendation. If a general character does not run through all the works of an author or an artist, it is because he impresses his own strongly upon none of them. It was reserved for Shakspeare alone to be great without leaving a trace of himself in his creations; and this is true of him only as a dramatist.

Salvator approached the confines of the sublime without ever actually reaching it. But that he was governed by no love of it is one of the most extraordinary assertions in this book. He

seems, on the contrary, to be always reaching after it, and yet to come short of that measure of it which we feel in other arts. The defect, we think, was in the art, more than in the man. We have already stated our doubts whether mere landscape-painting admits of the full development of the feeling; and Salvator never attempted the union of the physical and moral sublime, to which the nearest approach, if not the only successful example of it, in painting, is the Peter Martyr of Titian. Salvator had the sentiment in a high degree, and as much in color as in form. He seems to have been sensible of the inadequacy of his vehicle; he left few pictures to which he had given the whole power of which he seems to have been capable. He reminds us in this of Michael Angelo, who abandoned most of his works of sculpture in an unfinished state, from impatience or despair of equalling his conceptions. But, reversing one part of this author's judgment, we say that what Salvator has done no other has done so well; that "he has done nothing which it would not have been better not to have done," is too unmeaning to be denied.

The same general remarks do not apply to Claude. He is well known through copies and engravings, but only in those qualities in which he is most deficient. His composition is elaborately feeble, though harmonious. Nothing but his marvellous truth in color, though he was not a great colorist, could prevent his works from becoming absolutely tiresome. But there never was, and never will be, one who could paint the air as he did; whether it be sunshine or shade, morning, noon, or evening, from the foreground to the horizon, every part is bathed more and more deeply in the circumambient but invisible atmosphere, which gives a perfect truth and harmony of color to the light and shadow of every object. It is the very air of Italy, in which everything seems to float at an indefinite distance, without its being itself perceptible. Perhaps it is true that there is no pervading feeling in any one of his pictures beyond that of mere tranquillity. He was not a great artist; he had not the enthusiasm of genius; but want of fidelity to the truth of nature is not his fault.

These are the three great landscape-painters among the old artists. We enter into no discussion of the merits of the Dutch and Flemish masters, because we think them men of an inferior

mould, however admirable their skill in imitation and in color ; and they had the misfortune to live in an unpoetical country. After all we have read and seen, we still believe that landscape must rise very much above its present condition, before it can approach the works of these men and of many others whom we have left unnoticed. Yet we confess, that, while we look upon the great historical painters of the sixteenth and some even of the seventeenth century as exhibiting an excellence which it would be in vain for modern art to attempt to reach, we have not that feeling in regard to the landscape-painters. Much as we admire them, we yet feel that they have not done all of which the art is capable, nor even as much as may be hoped for in time to come. We have not space now to explain and defend this opinion at large. We have already stated generally our reasons for one part of it, in saying that a state of society and education—and we should have added, of religion—existed in the beginning of the sixteenth century, which soon ceased, and which never can exist again, and to which we are indebted for the great works of historical art. The same causes were not necessary to produce, and did not in fact produce, the same effect in landscape, which rose into existence under different influences. Nor has there been, by any means, down to the present time, so great a deterioration of landscape as of history. In the one, it is a failure of power from failure of its exciting causes ; in the other, it is a degradation of taste, which, though it infects the public, does not necessarily reach the artist. Historical art, besides other causes, must have failed for want of appropriate subjects to create a sufficient interest. We have no popular superstition, and a man cannot live in one age and paint another. If the artist do not feel an enthusiasm for his subject independently of that which he feels in his own representation of it, he will never rise to its height. It was to faith that Christian art owed its glory ; and in what has this generation faith ?

But the subjects of landscape are always the same, and are interesting in proportion to the degree of poetical culture. Certainly in this we are not necessarily inferior to any preceding age. It depends upon habits of life which are within our own control. The mind is now as susceptible as ever of the impressions of natural beauty, and of poetical and moral associations,

if we will but acquaint ourselves more with nature and less with the frivolous pursuits and the exasperating controversies of society. We see no reason why men should not arise in our day to surpass all that was accomplished by Claude, Gaspar, or Salvator.

Enough has been done among ourselves to justify, if not wholly to fulfil, this hope. Without thinking it necessary to deny the absolute merit of other artists, ancient or modern, we are firmly of opinion that we have seen no landscapes painted since the time of Titian superior to those of Allston. They are not numerous, for he devoted himself chiefly to history. If he had been willing to make landscape his peculiar study, we think there would not long have been any divided opinion upon his supremacy in that art.

We have abstained from any remarks on what is said of Mr. Turner, because we have no doubt of his excellence in what this author almost exclusively commends him for; we differ as to the possible value of such works only when compared with those executed in more solid materials. Of his earlier oil paintings we have already expressed our admiration; of his later ones we have nothing to say, because they are to us totally incomprehensible. They represent to our minds nothing in nature actually or conventionally. It would be easy to describe them as ridiculous; but if they are errors, they are those of genius, and the ridicule more properly belongs to those who encourage by pretending to understand and admire them.

II. THOUGHTS ON ART.*

THE appearance of Mr. Powers' statue† among us, and the feeling of earnest admiration with which it has been received, afford us an occasion to say a few words, not so much with reference to the sculptor and his work, as to Art in general; of which it may be said, that there is no one side of human knowledge concerning which the ideas of men are so vague, varying, and inadequate. To explain what it truly is, to place it in its true relations, to make every man feel that it is of importance to him, and that its concurrence is essential to the highest development of mankind, will be the future work of genius through many ages. If we cannot give a reason for the faith that is in us, we can still protest against scepticism and indifference. It will assist us in our endeavor if we classify the views and feelings with which Art is regarded among men.

I. We have the large class who have no thought on the subject, but to whom music, poetry, or any work of art not beyond the range of their sympathies, is a source of the highest gratification.

II. Those in whom a partial or onesided development has injured the natural balance of the faculties. Thus, the man whose life has been devoted to action in the world, is accustomed to view Art as action without a useful end; or else sees in it only a means of pleasure and sensual gratification. The religionist thinks its influence doubtful or dangerous to the interests of religion and morality.

III. Those persons who are not wanting in a due sense of the value of Art, but who see it only in parts and fragments, or are influenced by fashion, or some dominant mind; and are thus incapable of overseeing it as a whole.

IV. Artists.

We could wish there were a fifth class to be added: but in this

* From the Massachusetts Quarterly Review, by permission of the author.

† The Greek Slave.

age of the world, when we are made familiar with the works of all times, without selection, to oversee the whole, and, through the mass of "works" that obscure it, seize the clear image of Art itself, as the Greeks did, must evidently be granted only to genius, industry, and opportunity, combined. There may be individuals, but hardly a class.

We say, and more or less understandingly we believe, that God made man in his image. What are the attributes that we involuntarily attach to the Supreme Being? Are they not Creation, that originates; Action, that sustains; Love, that environs us, and in which we exist? The life of man is passed in the exercise of these same attributes or faculties. We believe that Religion is love to God and Man. To action man is spurred by necessity, from the first moment of his being; when he ceases to act he is dead. Man lives, and worships; he now feels the necessity to *create*. The natural delight in melody, in imitation, first points out the way; he makes a song; he draws a rude outline, and Art already exists.

This threefold nature of man, religious, practical, and artistic, is rarely if ever confided by nature, in full measure, to the same individual; always the one predominates. And thus we have the Priest, the Poet, and the Man of Action; or, in early times, the man of action *par excellence*—the Soldier; and this is the reason for the fascination that the military profession still retains: the soldier has been in all times the visible type of the man of action. The harmonious development of these three attributes is necessary to the harmonious development of the individual man; which explains that wonderful perfection of development that was found in individuals in the earlier ages; so that whilst the progress has still been towards the improvement of the race, we can point to no more perfect specimens than the Jews and the Greeks possessed.

In all times it has seemed to be the design of Providence to make some peculiar race the depository of the divine fire of a new idea, or at least, the means of its elaboration and interpretation to mankind; and by the steady progress of the idea in such a race an individual development has been attained, that has served as a model to all after times, and which, in its perfection, always suggests a divine inspiration rather than human progress, if the

two things can be separated. Such was the progress of a pure religion among the Jews, of a pure art among the Greeks. In their early progress the two were always most intimately united, but after a certain culminating point had been reached, a separation has taken place: Art became a minister to learning; Religion became narrow and bigoted; until in the hands of another race, and under the influence of new ideas, they have been again united for a time.

In those early times Art was grand and ideal, filled with the dignity of its mission. It has been the property and possession of the people, and not of individuals. The poems of Homer, the early Greek dramas, the Parthenon and its friezes, belonged to every Greek as much as to Pericles; but when its mission was fulfilled, when individuals became the patrons of Art, it lost its high ideal character, and this became its chief aim—to please and interest. Whenever, in latter times, Art has resumed a high and ideal position, it has been when, under the influence of dominant ideas, it has spoken to the genius of the people, instead of answering to the narrow demands of patrons. Thus the Art of the Middle Ages achieved its greatness by belonging to the Church, at a time when the Church belonged to the People; for one must always concede to the Catholic Church that it was the representative of the people, when the people had no other representative.

It will be seen that we have spoken principally with reference to imitative art; but our idea of Art includes all poetry, though it is one of the most difficult questions in relation to Art, how far, and in what sense, poetry is an art. A great confusion prevails: in the mind of most men, art in poetry suggests the idea of artifice; men are accustomed to say they prefer nature to art, and though one understands what they mean, the mistake is perpetuated.

Poetry is strictly an art; the first and highest of all the arts; subject to the same laws, yet wearing their chains more loosely, from its ethereal nature.

Poetry has this advantage over the other arts, that its expression is immediate; it speaks out and at once to all the world; it cannot be made a handmaid of luxury; its ideal nature, its inspiration, is the means by which it exists. Imitative art has a body,

an appearance, which can give pleasure apart from its soul, or inspiration; but if poetry be not inspired, it is naught. All other arts must be learnt by slow and laborious mechanical means; the body of imitative or musical art has to be mastered, before the soul can be expressed; there must be access to the most eminent masters; but the poet has only to speak, and the world listens.

Now, to a certain extent, the same is true of poetry which we have said of the other arts. The earliest poetry is always religious and ideal in its character, and belongs to the people; but when all things are in a state of decline, the small class of cultivated men become the heirs and depositaries of those treasures of art which were formerly the free property of all. This age, immediately succeeding what may be called the heroic age of Art, is usually fertile in excellent poets and artists of a secondary class. Living immediately in the presence of works of the highest order, with no bad examples as yet to create a false taste, or lower the standard, such men are in a position to reproduce whatever can be reproduced of the merit of ancient works; but instead of speaking to a now corrupted people, they address themselves to a small, but admirably cultivated class. As the audience differs, so do the works. Religious awe and reverence have disappeared, or are artificially reproduced; Poetry becomes more and more artificial; until a new idea, or a new revelation, calls for new bards and singers.

Following in this course, Art gradually becomes degraded; thus we have seen poetry become an amusement for learned men, and all kinds of bad taste perpetuated, in a chase after a superficial novelty.

Without entering at this time more fully into particulars of the various renovations and ideas that have infused, from time to time, new blood into the body of Art, we now come to a phase of Art peculiar to our own time.

An earnest, yet complex and self-conscious age, looking diligently for light and aid in all directions, recognises in its poets and artists a false aim, a want of true inspiration, a frigidity and artifice resulting from the worn-out traditions of elder schools. It demands a more earnest aim, a greater faithfulness; in a word, a return to Nature. Now this demand is founded in a

partial perception of truth, and leads to an error not the less inveterate that it is respectable. It arises from the belief that high Art is but an imitation and selection from exalted Nature ; whereas the soul of Art is, as has been said, "Creation in the beautiful." This error appears very natural so long as we regard the imitative arts only ; for their faithful imitation being the most obvious, comes to be regarded as the essential requisite. But turn to Architecture ; when this art becomes degraded, what Nature can we return to, save the Idea we have in our own mind of the true and beautiful ; we are not to return to Nature, but to Art ; and this return it is the province of Genius to accomplish. The same is true of Music. If, then, there are arts in which there is no imitation of nature, it follows that this imitation cannot be the essence, but only the form which Art adopts ; for the essence of all arts must be the same.

The development of this idea of a return to Nature has been productive of notable effects, both for good and evil ; and has formed the interior history of much of the art and literature of the past half century ; there are signs that it has run its course, and is giving place to other, perhaps not more complete, ideas. Its effect upon painting is visible in an infinite number of pleasing works, possessing both good taste and refinement, generally in the class of *portrait landscape* ; and the apotheosis of the idea may be found in a very singular, eloquent, and even valuable book, called the "Modern Painters, by a Graduate of Oxford." In the midst of pages of vivid description of Nature, and refined criticism of works of art, we are startled with the assertion repeated a thousand times, that in the British school of our day, and chiefly in one member of this school, resides all that is most valuable in landscape. The error is simply this ; that in a certain phase of Landscape Art the English have accomplished things never done nor attempted before. That this phase is not the highest, and that the author, with a vivid insight into a part, is incapable of a just view of the whole, would seem probable, even to one who did not know what the English school has accomplished.

In the domain of Poetry the consequences of the dominant idea of return to Nature have been still more striking. All nature has been ransacked. The poet has rushed to field, wood, and waterfall, and sat down before them to muse, with as much set

purpose as the painter does to sketch. The vocabulary being once adjusted, and the general tone of thought and sentiment prescribed, making poetry has become so easy that it is done as a matter of course; everybody can sit down before a waterfall; every tenth man can put his "Impressions" into verse; every hundredth can get them printed; the general taste becomes corrupted, sentiment mawkish, language exaggerated. And yet the leaders of this school have been great men, and, in spite of a false theory, have done good work in their time.

Another phase in Modern Art has been the reverse of this. Perceiving the religious nature of high Art, certain men of devout mind have taken as their model that period in Art when its aim was purely religious and ideal. Such has been the tendency of the modern German school of Painting. The result has been to reproduce the faults and shortcomings which were excusable in those early masters, from their imperfect knowledge, without reproducing the deep feeling which atones for them.

The consideration of these various stages of perfection, decline, and renovation, more or less successful, suggests the existence of laws by which they are governed, and the more we examine the subject, the more universal we find the application of these laws to be; we are made aware of the dependence of the artist on his time; and we become conscious that through his works the genius of the time speaks to us; more or less perfectly, indeed, according to the perfection of its interpreter. We arrive at the conviction, that where the genius of a people needs an expression, individual genius will never be wanting to give it utterance. We learn that it is with reason, that the works of art produced by a nation are instinctively appealed to, as the finest test of the rank they are entitled to among the nations. We learn, also, or should learn, this—not to expect or demand of artists a work analogous to Greek, or Italian, or any other art, but rather to look and hope for an artistic expression in new directions. Among the Greeks we have seen Poetry, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, all developed and carried to perfection in a single period of time, and among a single people. In modern times, on the contrary, each nation and age have chosen a new and separate direction. The genius of Germany finds at one period an expression in Gothic architecture, at another in a grand and original music.

One might almost believe that an original architecture could only spring up among a simple and devout people, of an unmixed race ; but that a perfect expression in music requires the full development of an older people. We may remark, moreover, that as we find the religious, the artistic, and the active principles developed in different individuals, so is it with nations, in an observable degree. The Jews were a religious race, the interpreters of the revelations of God to man ; the Greeks artistic. The Romans, the great active race of antiquity, borrowed their Art ; the English and French, the great active races among the moderns, have originated very little in Art ; save only in Poetry, the art of arts, which is least subject to these laws. May not this continent see a development of the English race in which the three parts of our nature shall not be so widely separated ; and a new art spring from a new order of things ?

To recur to our classification of admirers and critics of Art ; we can perceive that our first great class is the most important to Art. The finished connoisseur may know and appreciate all that is best in what has gone before us in Art, and his province is to interpret it, and spread its refining influence through the world ; but when a new Art springs up it has always to educate new and fresh minds to an understanding of itself ; and thus we see in all such cases renewed the ancient strife between new and old. Just in proportion as Art springs from and appeals to the genius of a people, it will be high and ideal in its character ; whilst Poetry, or works of art that appeal to a cultivated audience, will always be elegant and conventional ; though it must be conceded that the period of transition, if it have never produced the greatest, has often given birth to the most exquisite and pleasing works.

In our age no man is satisfied to admire and be instructed, but all must judge and criticize. This being so, a conscientious mind will still prescribe to itself certain rules ;—for human judgment, if once it leaves the region of instinct, can be trusted only by reference to principles.

The first natural question is, how does this please *me* ? But we are already in danger, for how do you know that what pleases yourself is good and true ? Your taste may be corrupted. Your feeling may demand something false and exaggerated.

The next step is to compare. But still we are in danger.

Things of the same kind may be compared, but an original work of art is different in *kind* from anything that has gone before. The Venus de Medici and Mr. Powers' statue cannot be compared, except in certain external particulars; for they express ideas as different as possible; ideas different in kind.

Where, then, lies the difficulty? Simply in this; that supposing a work to be a true work, and a new work to us, we approach it in a false position when we come to criticize it. We should come to learn from it, and to admire it. We criticize because we are afraid we shall admire amiss. We are not simple-minded; we are afraid of being taken in to admire something not admirable. Only make it certain to men that they can make no mistake in admiring, and admiration may be had cheap. This hasty criticism is always the fault of the partially cultivated class.

Most artists will in their hearts admit, that contemporary criticism is for the most part worthless in itself, and injurious to the artist who listens to it. He must know better than his audience, or he knows nothing.

We believe that it is a difficult matter to criticize aright. What is left us? To each man his suffrage, and nothing more. But let each one remember, in giving that suffrage, that to a clear and instructed eye his opinion shows plainly enough his own range of apprehension and insight; but can show nothing of the relative value of the work, with reference to other works.

In brief, our advice would be, on seeing a new work which you believe to be an important one—take time. Try to *see* it. Do not think it incumbent upon you to think or feel about it. Do not dwell upon it long at a time, for the attention becomes fatigued; but return frequently, and each time you will find that you understand it better since you last saw it. It has been with you in the interval. It has lived with you, and educates you to itself. And when you have learned from it all it can teach you, write down your thought about it, and see how impossible to compass it in words; how paltry and insignificant criticism at sight seems to you!

It is only works which we have thus lived with that we can truly criticize: and such criticism is very different from finding

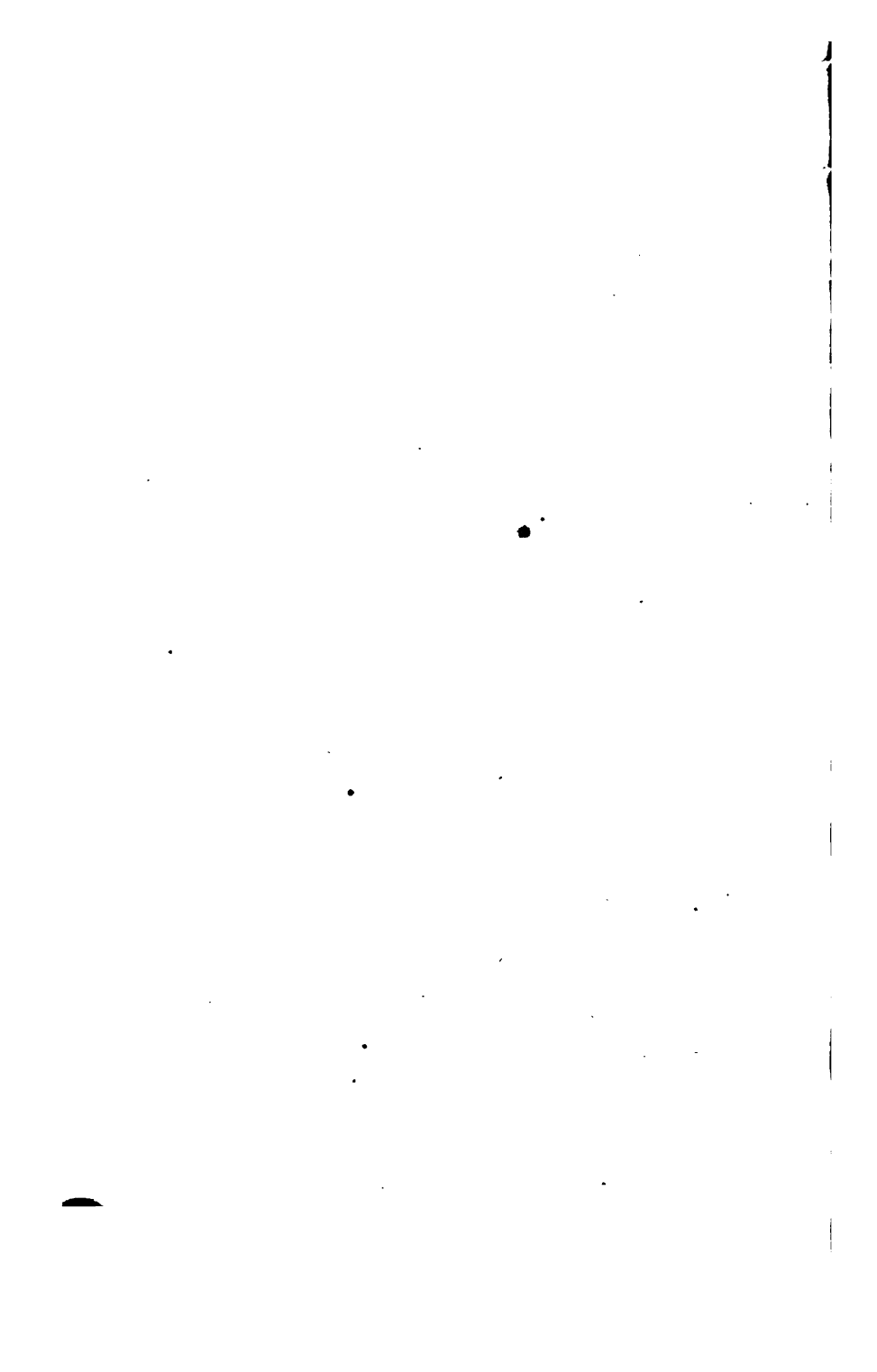
fault. If a work is not worth this, it may be worthy of consideration, but not of criticism.

Can we hold ourselves guiltless, if after this we say a few words concerning the statue which suggested our subject?

What do we demand when an American man, of this century, takes hammer and chisel, and gives us in white marble his idea of a lovely woman? Certainly not a Grecian goddess; but Woman, such as two thousand years, and the Christian religion, have made her since; a modern woman. Not an exquisite generalization of all that is most lovely in the female form, to stand boldly in the public gaze and receive the homage of all worshippers; but rather, an ideal individual. The ancient Venus suggests no need of dress; but we feel that this woman has laid aside her dress and is conscious of it, yet she stands the image of chastity. Her purity awes you like the Lady in Comus. The form is full of individualities, all blending in an exquisite whole, and by the very peculiarities which strike the eye as differing from the Greek ideal, claiming our affection and sympathy.

We learn that this is a slave, exposed for sale in the marketplace; and supposing her a captive, torn from her home, we can imagine few scenes that shall call for so much pity, admiration, and tenderness; all these feelings must be called forth in the highest degree, but yet, pervading all, and beyond all these, the sense of Beauty must everywhere be satisfied. And so it is; and indeed most persons go away with the idea that they have been called upon to see and admire nothing but a beautiful naked female figure. But visit it again and again, and you will find this marble figure steals gradually into your affections. There is no theatrical air, no forcing of the story upon you, no open demand of your sympathies; you see before you only this exquisitely delicate form, self-dependent, armed only with its purity, and needing no other shield than this in the most touching of all situations.

We close with the hope that our artist has ere this received tangible demonstration that he can depend upon the growing taste and love of Art in his own countrymen both for praise and bread.



III. ART AND ARTISTS IN AMERICA.*

THE condition and prospects of Ideal Art in this country is a subject on which much might be said, we think, full of interest and instruction, and which ought to be brought home unremittingly, earnestly, eloquently, to the general mind of the nation. There is more dependent upon this, for us as a people, than has at all reached the appreciation of many. If we are ever to lead—not a few, but large classes among us—any higher life than may serve to furnish the plate to feast our bodies at the banquet, and the silver to embellish our coffins, it is quite time for us to begin. This we can do only by learning to forget sometimes this material, physical existence we have been living so long—the feverish and weary pursuit of mere wealth and position. We must recognise and feel more constantly the presence of the spiritual, the ideal—resting and re-making our minds in an atmosphere of the beautiful. We may become what is called a prosperous nation without this, but certainly not in any high sense either refined or happy. To think that riches are beautiful! that national affluence and power, in whatsoever form and degree, are the highest good! We might as well prefer the pomp of shroud and pall, chased coffin-plates, torches, and glittering tomb, to that delightful sense of life that knows it has a whole creation to itself.

We have never seen this subject fully set forth, in regard to this country—set forth in a manner to impress the mass of intelligent minds with the great use and necessity of appreciation, encouragement, and labor in the Fine Arts. It should be shown, how great a field actually exists among us for original effort in all their departments. It should be shown, that no nation in the world ever possessed a greater amount of inventive talent; and that—as the creative faculty, that high faculty which makes the great poet and painter, as nearly allied to a subtle and ready

* Extract from an Article in the American Review, No. XII.

invention (in the general acceptance of the word)—it may be found in time, as we believe, that no nation has possessed more creative power in the world of pure ideality. It should be made clear to every one who will read at all upon the subject, that in no way can he more increase the value of life to himself, or add more to the refinement and glory of the nation, than by cultivating a noble taste for the Arts, and nobly encouraging the Artist. It could be made evident, finally, from what has been done and what is doing, that a very great change is already taking place in this respect, and that the Americans in a few years will be found achieving works in painting, sculpture, music, and architecture, that would do no dishonor to the most brilliant age of any other country.

* *

In the first number of this Review a distinguished writer—in an article entitled “Influence of the Trading Spirit on the Social and Moral Life of America,”—set forth with great point and force the laboriousness of Americans in general—their entire absorption in business, to the exclusion of nearly all amusement and recreation, whether physical, social, or intellectual—the excessive anxiety written on their countenances, and the rapid wasting away of life in the heated whirl of the pursuit of gain.

* * * *

Whatever will serve to take us out of this low atmosphere in which we have been living, into one more ethereal and spiritual, is to be assiduously cultivated. And what will best accomplish this? Surely, next to virtue, a refined taste for the Fine Arts—for *all* ideal creations, whether in Poetry or Music, Sculpture, Painting, or Architecture. Knowledge, Science, alone will not do it.

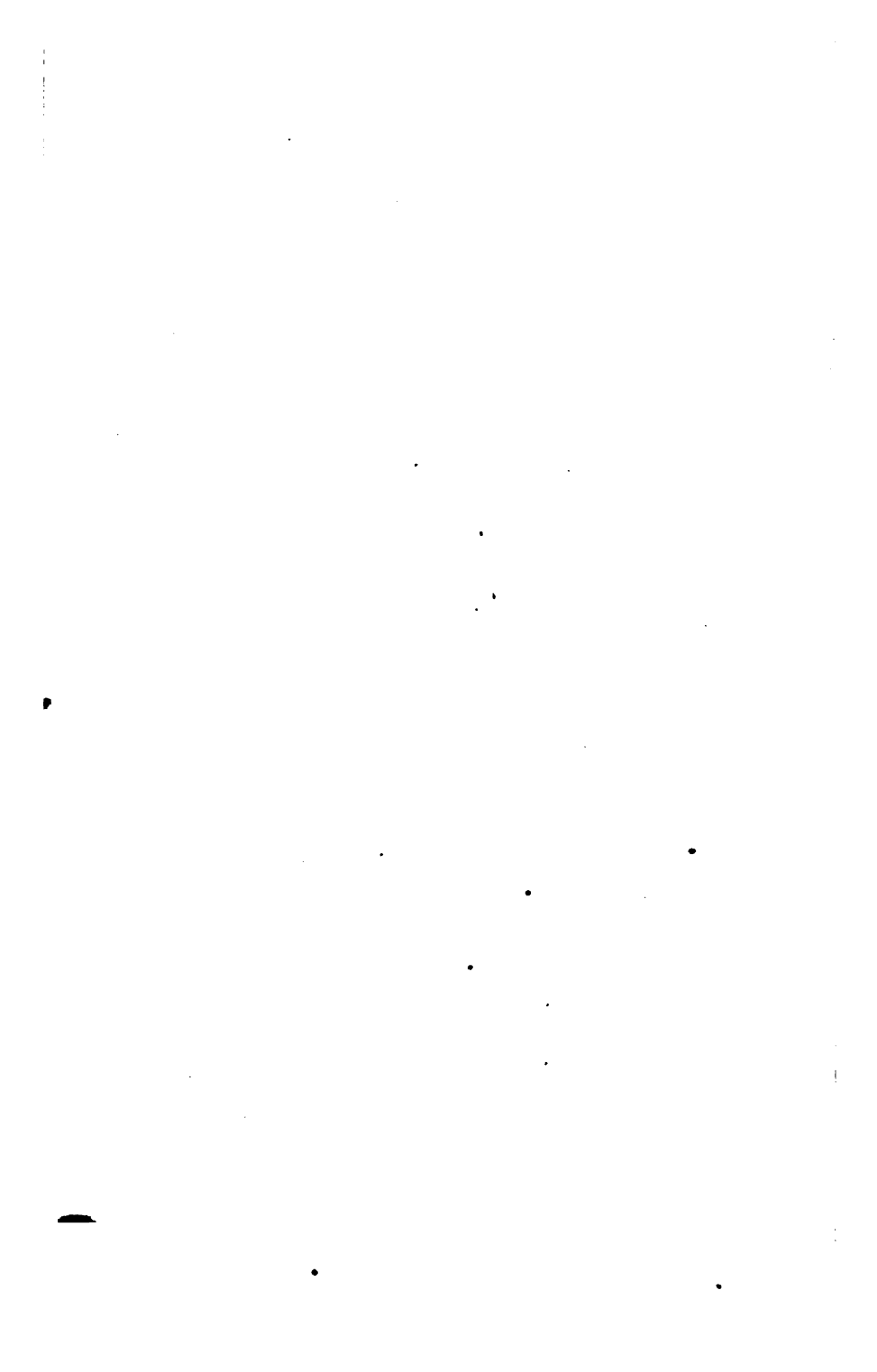
* * *

But if the Arts are of so vast importance to a people, how shall they be reared and cherished among them, and obtain over them a daily and living influence? Undoubtedly a love for ideal creations must be mainly a growth from the people themselves. If, when they have had teachers among them with “the vision and the faculty divine,” they will not yield themselves, at some time, to the influence of the true and beautiful, it is useless to expect it for them. The government of a nation, however, can do much towards such an end, where the capacity and power of perception are existent among them. We know that it is un-

democratic in *this* country to intimate that government has anything to do with such matters—having for its chief business, to see that men are equal. We do not agree with Democracy in this respect. And we are somewhat encouraged in our heresy, by observing that all the nations that have ever known what honor was—whether Monarchies or Republics—have pursued a very different course. There are many ways in which a government can assist the growth of the Arts among its citizens—by adorning its public grounds and buildings with statues and paintings—by multiplying noble structures—by raising monuments and tombs to its illustrious dead—especially by commissioning native talent instead of a *foreign* artist. * * *

How many liberal commissions might be given to native artists of genius, if only each State would commission some painting to adorn the buildings of her capitol, or an appropriate bust or monument for some one of her distinguished sons. How many the government might employ, and for how long a time, if she were willing to remember the great men who have served in her councils, commanded on her battle-fields, or fallen for her flag on the ocean, and would permit their fellow-countrymen—artists, of genius as great as theirs—to commemorate their resting-places. But the expense! Government cannot go to such expense! Beloved patriot, and scrupulous devotee of economy! your frugal government could expend \$30,000,000 in a profitless and needless war with Florida Indians; but to bestow a public memorial at a cost of some \$20,000 or \$50,000 on a statesman or soldier of the Revolution, is an unwarranted prodigality! * *

We believe a better state of things is arising in the country. There is genius, there is appreciation; we may reasonably hope that in the course of one century, even a majority of Congress may succeed in persuading themselves, that it is not a waste of the People's money to expend it on a monument for one who died for the People.



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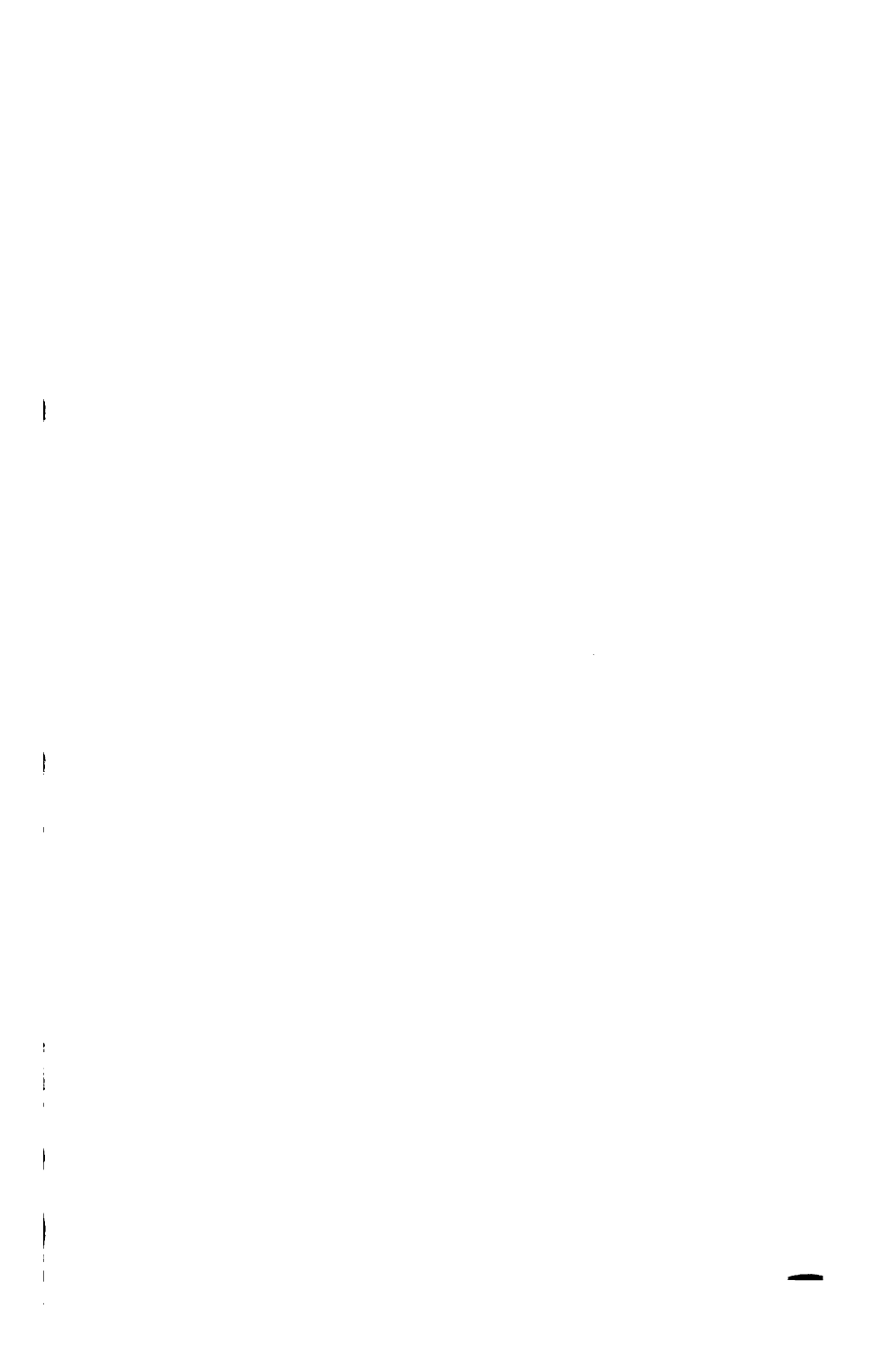
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